

Application No. 09/681,154
Amendment "B" dated July 7, 2005
Reply to Office Action mailed June 7, 2005

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants respectfully submit that this response should be entered after final, without an RCE, because the amendments place the application in condition for immediate allowance and do not enter any new issues for consideration.

The final Office Action, mailed June 7, 2005, considered claims 3, 5-8, 11-15, 17-19, and 23-28. Of those claims, claims 3, 5-8, 11-13, 15, 23, and 24 were rejected¹ and claims 14, 17-19, and 25-28 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were otherwise found allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By this paper, claims 17-19, 23, 26 and 28 have been amended² and claim 25 has been cancelled, such that claims 3, 5-8, 11-15, 17-19, 23-24 and 26-28 remain pending, of which claims 23 and 24 are the only independent claims at issue.

Amended independent claim 23 now incorporates all of the limitations of cancelled claim 25, such that claim 23 should now be found in condition for immediate allowance for at least the same reasons that claim 25 was found to be allowable in the last action. Independent claim 24 also includes all of the limitations of claim 25 and should also, therefore, be found in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons.

In view of the foregoing, all of the rejections and objections of record are now moot, such that all of the pending claims should now be found in condition for immediate allowance.³ In the

¹ Claims 3, 5-8, 11-13, 15, 23, and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith (U.S. Patent No. 6,557,756 B1) in view of Knowlton et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,141,006 A).

² Many of the claim amendments have been made to fix claim dependency and to correct minor informalities.

³ Although the prior art status of the cited art is not being challenged at this time, and some of the assertions of the cited art is not being specifically addressed, Applicants reserve the right to challenge the prior art status and assertions made with regard to the cited art at any appropriate time in the future, should the need arise. Accordingly, any arguments and amendments made herein should not be construed as acquiescing to any assertion made with regard to the prior art, including the asserted prior art status of the cited art.

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event that the Examiner finds remaining impediment to a prompt allowance of this application that may be clarified through a telephone interview, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned attorney.

Dated this 7 day of July, 2005.

Respectfully submitted,



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